



Maine Department of Conservation
Natural Areas Program

Vaccinium boreale Hall & Aalders

Alpine Blueberry

Habitat: Alpine meadows and exposed, rocky sites.
[Alpine or subalpine (non-forested, upland); Rocky coastal (non-forested, upland)]

Range: Newfoundland, Labrador, and northern Quebec, south to the alpine summits of northern New England and northern New York.

Phenology: Flowers June - July.

Family: Ericaceae



Illustration from Crow's New England's Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plants.

Aids to Identification: Blueberries are well known shrubs with alternate, simple leaves, white, urceolate (urn-shaped) flowers and sweet berry fruits. *Vaccinium boreale* is a diminutive blueberry of exposed environments. It occurs with, and looks very similar to, the common *V. angustifolium*, lowbush blueberry, at all known sites in Maine. *V. boreale* is a short (up to 9 cm tall), shrub with very narrow (2-6 mm wide) leaves. *V. angustifolium* is either taller or with wider leaves, or both. Additionally, the flowers of *V. boreale* are smaller (corolla is 3-4 mm long) and appear 10-20 days earlier than the flowers of *V. angustifolium* (corolla is 4-8 mm long).

Ecological characteristics: Often found growing in cracks in rocks in alpine environments, often with *Vaccinium* species.

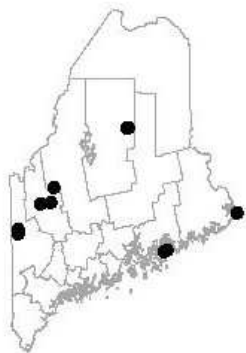
Synonyms: Formerly considered a variety of *Vaccinium angustifolium* Ait.; now known to be chromosomally and morphologically distinct..

Rarity of *Vaccinium boreale*

State Rank:	S2	Imperiled in Maine because of rarity or vulnerability to further decline.
New England Rank:	Division 1	Globally rare plant occurring in New England: Only a few occurrences exist within New England.
Global Rank:	G4	Widespread, abundant, and apparently secure globally, but with cause for long-term concern.

Status of *Vaccinium boreale*

Federal Status:	None	No Federal Status.
State Status:	Special Concern	Rare in Maine, but not sufficiently rare to be considered Threatened or Endangered.



- ▲ Historical (before 1982)
● Recent (1982 - present)

Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 9 town(s) in the following county(ies): Franklin, Hancock, Piscataquis, Somerset.

Dates of documented observations are: 1915, 1994, 1995 (2), 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000 (2), 2001 (3), 2002

Reason(s) for rarity:

At southern limit of range; habitat is naturally scarce. This plant is uncommon, but not as rare as previously believed.

Conservation considerations:

At some locations, small populations could be threatened by heavy hiker or tourist use.

The information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 10 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,
please contact the Natural Areas Program
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

